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## Smallholder fresh fish marketing enterprise: A veritable livelihood strategy for economic empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Fish is a very important agricultural product in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), due to its prime position in the economy of the nations it comprises. SSA is undergoing significant teeming challenges due to a number of environmental and socio-economic disruptions and pressures from population growth, degradation of aquatic resources and environment, climate change, among others. Much emphasis have been laid on efficient fresh fish marketing as key to reducing malnutrition by making fish available to people living under subsistence level at affordable prices. However, the general purpose of the paper established that smallholder fresh fish marketing is a veritable livelihood strategy for economic empowerment in selected SSA. Specifically, the paper described the socio-demographic features of the smallholder fish dealers in the study area; determined the structure of the markets; determined the factors that drive vertical differentiation of their marketing channels; identified the various methods used in fish processing, storage and transportation; described the constraints encountered by the smallholder fishers; and finally, assessed the level of gender participation in smallholder fish marketing. Studies reviewed in the paper employed purposive, multistage random sampling technique, among other in collecting data from numerous respondents. Findings from majority of the studies indicated that the average age of the fish marketers fell between 35 and 50 years. Results further showed that majority of the fish producers and retailers had some form of formal education. More so, the average household size of the majority of respondents was 5 members with between 15 and 18 years' experience in fish marketing. Results further indicated that the markets were under weak oligopoly at concentration ratio of 47% an implication that some powerful dealers are trying to control the fish markets. In addition, this means that the activities of the largest four fish marketers affected the price and demand for fish in the market. Further results showed that fish marketing was profitable with channel 2 having the highest net margin with high marketing efficiency. The results indicated that these differences in marketing efficiency among the channels were significant at 1% confidence interval. Furthermore, the study found that smoke-drying were the predominant processing method at very significant frequency levels for the various group of marketers. Moreover, results showed that the challenges facing fish marketing at an average of 2.74 on a 5-Point Likert rating scale included lack of capital, seasonality of fish business, and lack of government assistance, produce deterioration, lack of storage facilities, among others were the fish marketing challenges. Marital status, household size, value of fish and membership of cooperative unions were the factors that significantly impacted the vertical differentiation of fish marketing at 5% confidence level. Inadequate financing, high transportation cost and lack of market stall were major constraining factors to efficient fish marketing. Hence, the paper concludes that fresh fish marketing in SSA is profitable and efficient, and as a matter of fact, veritable economic pillar upon which many farming households are supported. The paper recommended that governments of the SSA should provide support for expansion of the businesses of smallholder fish marketers, provide proper road networks so as to reduce transportation hurdles and subsidization of market costs for the marketers, construction of standard shops for smallholder fish marketers in order to shield them from the harsh weather and climatic conditions.

### Biography

Ikechi Kelechi Agbugba was appointed as the State President/Chairman as well as a National Delegate/Representative of a Corpers' Association, Gombe State Chapter and National Headquarters, Jos, Plateau State, respectively. Presently, he is a University Professor and Researcher in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics/Extension, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

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